



---

Student, faculty, and industry perceptions of the development and use of  
Massive Open Online Courses in clothing and textiles education: Continuing studies

Genna Reeves-DeArmond, Independent Scholar, USA  
Jennifer Mower, Central Michigan University, USA  
Keith Nishida, Woodbury University, USA

Keywords: faculty, MOOC, perceptions, students

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) rose to popularity in 2012. Jawaharlal (2015) explains that MOOCs are transforming from a “social experiment to becoming a standard” as online courses and learning platforms become more accepted in higher education (para. 11). This paper extends the ongoing discussion about MOOCs in clothing and textile education (CT) (see Reeves-DeArmond, Mower, & Nishida, 2013, 2014) and presents the results of a study that explored student, faculty, and industry professionals’ perceptions of MOOCs in CT education. This paper also adds to the ongoing discussion by including the perceptions of CT industry professionals.

Participants were recruited via (1) the International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) listserv, (2) CT-focused social media sites (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) hosted by professional organizations and academic CT programs, and (3) three junior and senior-level courses at one Northwest university. An online survey that consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions was conducted with three sample groups: CT students, faculty, and industry professionals. Participants were provided with a brief overview of MOOCs before starting the survey. Quantitative data were analyzed via descriptive statistics. A coding guide was developed for all qualitative questions after initial theme review; constant comparison was used to analyze data. The survey yielded 295 responses; 188 participants (163 students, 99 faculty, and 33 industry professionals) completed the survey.

The mean age of the student sample was 23.8 years (range of 18-47 years old). The majority of students were female (88.0%) and of a junior or senior academic standing (60.3%). The mean age of the faculty sample was 57 years (range of 30-67 years old). The majority of faculty were currently in an assistant or associate professor position (58.3%). The most common areas of concentration for faculty included apparel and textile design (45.0%), fashion and retail merchandising (37.5%), textiles, and history of dress (22.5% each). The mean age of the industry professional sample was 37 years (range of 24-60 years old). The most common areas of employment for industry professionals included design/product development (44.4%), quality control, and retailing (16.6% each).

The majority of students (72.0%) reported that they would take a MOOC. In this way, students recognize the versatility of MOOCs. Approximately half of the faculty respondents (49.0%) reported that they would take a MOOC. Eighty-three percent of industry professional respondents reported that they would take a MOOC. Seventy-nine percent of students reported that they would take a MOOC to try out a major before enrolling in a college or university program in order to see if it was a good fit.

Perceptions of the positive aspects of MOOCs were sought via an open-ended question. The most common positive aspects of MOOCs cited by students were convenience, the ability to gain from a MOOC (e.g., different perspectives and introduction to a subject) (23.7% each), accessibility (21.6%), and opportunities for interaction (20.6%). The most common positive aspects of MOOCs

cited by faculty were accessibility (55.0%), increased/expanded knowledge (37.5%), and offering solutions to a variety of situations (e.g., scheduling conflicts) (27.5%). The most common positive aspects of MOOCs cited by industry professionals were increased/expanded knowledge (46.6%), convenience (40.0%), and accommodation of individual/a variety of learning styles (26.6%).

Perceptions of the negative aspects of MOOCs were sought via an open-ended question. The most common negative aspects of MOOCs cited by students were a lack of accommodation for learning styles (37.2%), fewer opportunities for interaction (32.3%), and absence of certain elements necessary for learning (12.7%). The most common negative aspects of MOOCs cited by faculty were value-of-education concerns (59.4%), lack of interaction (51.3%), and lack of accommodation for learning styles (32.4%). The most common negative aspects of MOOCs cited by industry professionals were lack of interaction (71.4%), lack of accommodation for learning styles (42.8%), and possible negative consequences for the industry (7.1%).

The three sample groups were also asked what CT course topics they would take in a MOOC format via an open-ended question. The most common course topics cited by students were textiles, business (32.2% each), apparel construction, design (18.8% each), and fashion trend analysis/forecasting (17.7%). The most common course topics cited by faculty were business (40.9%), special topic courses, design/product development (22.7% each), history topics, and technology/software (18.1% each). The most common course topics cited by industry professionals were current events and issues in the fashion industry (53.8%), textiles (30.7%), technology/software, and how to.../best practices for...-related topics (e.g., best practices for recycling textiles and how to dye textiles ) (23.0% each).

MOOCs that cover business topics should be developed and offered for a student audience, as this sample group reported the highest interest in taking a MOOC and expressed the most interest in this topic. MOOCs that are more theoretical or foundational in nature (i.e., less practical skills-based) are recommended because such material is most effectively translated in the online learning environment. The findings regarding reasons for taking a MOOC suggest that MOOCs can be more experimental in nature and serve a variety of functions (e.g., to test out a major). It is recommended that industry professionals develop a MOOC in partnership with a faculty member to ensure CT course quality. Course quality was an aspect about which faculty members reported great concern. MOOCs are a valued online education delivery format that CT programs can use to reach today's diverse students; however, MOOCs can only be developed after a "needs" assessment that involves identifying what skills students need to learn in CT programs. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample of students and industry professionals.

Jawaharlal, M. (2015, March 18). The MOOC experiment. *Huffington Post College*. [http://www.Huffingtonpost.com/dr-mariappan-jawaharlal/the-mooc-experiment\\_b\\_6891416.html](http://www.Huffingtonpost.com/dr-mariappan-jawaharlal/the-mooc-experiment_b_6891416.html)

Reeves-DeArmond, G., Mower, J., & Nishida, K. (2013). *Student and faculty perceptions of the development and use of Massive Open Online Courses in clothing and textiles education*. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Textile and Apparel Association, New Orleans.

Reeves-DeArmond, G., Mower, J., LeHew, M., Rees, K., West, A., & Becker, J. (2014). *To MOOC or not to MOOC: Opportunities for Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) use and development in ITAA and the clothing and textiles discipline*. Special topics session presented at the meeting of the International Textile and Apparel Association, Charlotte.